



UNITED STATES UNIVERSITY
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COLLEGE OF NURSING

United States University College of Nursing

Self-Study Report Master of Science in Nursing

VOLUME I

Prepared for Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education
July 2014

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United States University
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Program Information Form Baccalaureate & Graduate Nursing Programs

General Information

Official Name of Institution: United States University

Type of Institution (check one): public private, secular private, religious proprietary

Institution's Carnegie Classification: Bac//Masters: Baccalaureate/Masters Universities

Chief Executive Officer of Institution (Full Name and Title): Timothy P. Cole, President and Chief Executive Officer

Chief Executive Officer of Institution's email address: tcole@usuniversity.edu

Official Name of Nursing Unit: College of Nursing

Chief Nurse Administrator (Full Name, Title and Credentials): Renee P. McLeod, PhD, APRN-BC, CPNP-PC, FAANP, Dean and Professor, College of Nursing

Address: 830 Bay Blvd.

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Web site address (URL) of institution: http://www.usuniversity.edu/

Web site address (URL) of nursing unit: http://www.usuniversity.edu/programs/college-of-nursing/

Web site address (URL) of institution's catalog (if available electronically):
http://www.usuniversity.edu/student-services/university-catalog/

Web site address (URL) of nursing student handbook (if available electronically): Not available online

Check here to verify that the Chief Nurse Administrator, identified above, has approved this completed form and confirms its contents as of 7/25/2014. (Date)

Introduction:

History of InterAmerican College and United States University

United States University (USU) is a private, proprietary institution that has evolved from a small non-profit establishment known as InterAmerican College (IAC) founded in 1997 by Reymundo and Maria Marin. This non-profit college's mission was to provide educational opportunities to working professionals, Latinos, and educated immigrants to increase bilingual capacity in education and healthcare in Southern California. When USU began, there were no proximate programs or universities with a mission to primarily serve minority, immigrant, and underserved students seeking a career in the health sciences and nursing. This mission was highly valued by the South Bay and greater San Diego community due to the large immigrant population. Today, USU still stands as the only university dedicated to providing quality, affordable educational opportunities to this population. Out of 92 students in the current Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) there are 22 male students of any race, eight African American, 20 Asian, 35 Hispanic, 10 Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, three with two or more races and 16 White/Caucasian/Non-Hispanic.

IAC continued to grow but with fiscal exigencies arising, and at the suggestion of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) leadership, the institution moved to become a for-profit institution in 2007. It was approved for the structural change and accredited by WASC in 2009. In April 2010, the school was renamed United States University. USU moved to its new facility in Chula Vista, CA in May 2011.

USU initiated a major administrative reorganization in 2012. (See Appendix 1.1) Financial issues were identified by the Board of Trustees, and an experienced financial consultant was employed to analyze, recommend, and oversee the implementation of change. Additional financial sponsorship was sought to secure the financial stability of USU and the search for a new President was undertaken. A new owner/sponsor for the institution was found early in 2012. In July, 2012 Timothy Cole took office as President and Chief Executive Officer of USU and currently serves in this role. After his analysis of the institution he recruited highly qualified and experienced administrators into positions of management at USU. WASC accreditation over the years of the institution has been both positive and negative. Following a site visit in May 2013, the University was designated to be accredited on probation, a status which will be reviewed in June, 2015. The most recent accreditation action was approval of a structural change (of ownership), (The Team Report on Structural Change Visit May 2014 made by WASC can found in Appendix 1.1). The Department of Education has been informed of this change.

Currently, USU offers undergraduate and graduate programs in Business, Health Sciences, Nursing, and Education. Multiple Subject and Single Subject Teaching Credentials are also offered. A recently-developed Office of Extended Education provides training in a variety of vocational areas. USU continues its commitment to affordable education and in 2012 USU was ranked 4th among surveyed for-profit educational institutions in affordability by the US Department of Education and first in the State of California for-profit institutions (See Appendix 1.1).

Development of Nursing Programs

In 2005, the California Wellness Foundation awarded IAC a planning grant to develop a nursing program. The institution submitted a feasibility study to the Board of Registered Nursing (BRN) in 2006 to establish and operate nursing programs and this was approved in June 13, 2008. In 2009, IAC began its first offering in this area. The Entry Level Masters,¹ (ELM) was a two-phase, non-degree/degree program that admitted students with a bachelor's degree in another field or discipline. The first phase was designed to provide students with the requirements needed to take the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) and receive a Registered Nurse License. The second phase was for the students to matriculate into the Master of Science in of Nursing – Family Nurse Practitioner program (MSN-FNP). The BRN approved this program in 2009. In 2010, the institution began to offer the MSN-FNP that was approved by WASC.

USU, responding to student needs as well as the needs of the larger nursing community in the surrounding areas, submitted an application for an online only MSN with a specialization in Administration to WASC. This program was approved in spring 2011. This MSN program afforded undergraduate students an added option to continue their education at the graduate level if they did not want to become a Family Nurse Practitioner or could not continue in the face-to-face on ground program. A specialization in Education leading to the MSN-Education was also added. (See WASC binder on WASC communications for 2011 for more information on the historical development on the MSN Administration program. The binder will be available on site for review.

The College of Nursing is one of four colleges in USU. Organizationally there is a Dean, Assistant Dean, Director of MSN-FNP program, Director of MSN, faculty, and staff. The administrative management team and all university services support the CON. (See Appendix 1.2 for organizational charts.)

The masters programs prepare Family Nurse Practitioners, Advanced Practice Nurse Administrators, and Advanced Practice Nurse Educators. The MSN-FNP was initially part of the ELM program and was only offered through on-ground classes. The MSN Administration and Education programs are only offered online. These online programs were developed in 2011. In reviewing the programs for the current Self-Study we identified that the MSN Administration and Education programs have a separate core curriculum that is similar to but not the exact courses as offered for the MSN-FNP. In addition, each program asserts learning outcomes that are specifically defined to address the specialization and are, therefore, more narrowly focused than the MSN-FNP Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs). For this reason, the PLOs of the MSN-FNP program were revised. These PLOs will be used as the CON's MSN program outcomes in the Self-Study. (See Appendix 1.3) Implementation of these PLO's is currently being undertaken.

¹Upon recommendation of the California Board of Registered Nursing, this program was renamed the Entry Level Masters (ELM) option with an Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing (ABSN) option in 2013.

Challenges of College of Nursing

During the early period of the CON's development (2008-2014) the CON had a succession of Deans/Directors and faculty. Repeated visits and guidance from the BRN consultants, as well as external consultants assisted in the development of programs currently known as Entry Level Masters (ELM) with a Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing (ABSN) option and a MSN-FNP.

The ELM program is no longer enrolling students at USU/CON as of 2013. The ABSN offers a terminal degree of a BSN. Additional undergraduate nursing programs exist and are offered in the CON but will not be addressed further in this document.

The MSN-FNP encountered difficulties in meeting the BRN rules and regulations, as well as meeting the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) Standards of MSN Essentials and National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculty (NONPF) competencies. The direction and guidance by a director of this graduate program, in addition to the Dean of the CON facilitated the positive progress of the program. The BRN's consultation and external consultation were also used as an assist in meeting USU and program expectations for MSN-FNP students. The continuing approval of the MSN-FNP was granted on November 8, 2013 by the BRN. In fall of 2013, the request for a 'minor curriculum revision' was submitted to the BRN requesting that the first six courses in the FNP program be allowed to be taken out of sequence to facilitate student progress. The need for the graduates of this program to sit for national certification has stimulated this self-study process by USU and the CON. (See Appendix 1. 4 for a summary of the development of the MSN-FNP)

The inauguration of new and committed administrators, a new majority owner, and a realigned Board of Trustees, which remains ongoing, has moved USU forward to strengthen and coordinate the goals of growth and quality while maintaining the commitment to the mission of the institution. The CON is now under new leadership of a highly qualified Dean as of June, 2014. This history of USU and reports submitted to various accrediting bodies are available to assist the CCNE visitors and can be found in the WASC and CON binders available on site for examination. (See Appendix 1.4 for tables on the chronology of USU's accreditation process and CON's MSN-FNP evolution.)

USU Mission and Values

The Mission and Values of USU have recently been reviewed and revised to more accurately reflect the evolving institution. The current USU Mission and Values are:

United States University provides professional and personal educational opportunities, with a special outreach to underserved groups. Through campus and online courses, the University offers affordable, relevant and accessible undergraduate and graduate degree programs and certificates in a supportive student-centered learning environment

The values define the community and are enabling the University to create a unique environment, for both internal and external stakeholders. The core values of United States University are:

1. Affordability
2. Quality
3. Integrity
4. Diversity
5. Inclusiveness
6. Lifelong Learning.

Institutional Learning Outcomes

1. Communicate clearly and effectively through writing, speaking, and using technology.
2. Apply quantitative reasoning to address complex challenges.
3. Effectively gather, analyze, and integrate information from a variety of sources.
4. Apply critical thinking in the research and problem solving processes.
5. Demonstrate ethical reasoning and actions to provide leadership as a socially responsible citizen.
6. Work collaboratively as members and leaders of diverse teams.
7. Exhibit mastery of knowledge and skills within a discipline.

College of Nursing

The College of Nursing has recently reviewed and revised its mission statement and it is congruent with that of the parent institution. The mission, expected program outcomes, and philosophy reflect professional nursing standards, guidelines, and represent the expectations of the community of interest.

Mission of College of Nursing

To develop diverse lifelong learners grounded in Caring Science and prepared to be innovative leaders in a dynamic healthcare system.

This mission of the College of Nursing of USU is inclusive of all nursing programs offered, undergraduate and graduate. Also, the Philosophy of the Nursing incorporates the values and beliefs that form the underpinnings for developing and teaching both undergraduate and graduate nursing programs.

Philosophy of the Nursing Program:

The philosophy of a nursing program, grounded in Caring Science and preparing nurses to be innovative leaders in a dynamic healthcare system, acknowledges nursing as a discipline with a unique body of knowledge and a professional practice informed by the view of persons, health and healing, health care nursing, and curriculum. Scholarship and practice in nursing require creative integration of multiple ways of knowing and integration of current knowledge in health. Nurses makes a unique contribution because of their special focus: nurturing the wholeness of persons and environment through caring. We believe in the wholeness of human beings. We believe that people have the ability to identify their own needs, have inner wisdom to solve their own problems, and often only need support and/or understanding to better recognize and respond to their healthcare issues. Health is individually and subjectively defined and best understood by the person experiencing it.

Nursing acknowledges a difference between curing and healing, whereas, healing represents wholeness, oneness, and unity of mind-body-spirit and an inner process. Curing is an outer treatment process. Diversity is valued and celebrated.

Beliefs about learning and environment, which foster lifelong learning, are derived from an understanding of person, the nature of nursing and nursing knowledge, and the mission of the University. We believe in a disciplinary Caring Science orientation to education. We believe in teaching evidence-based learning and practice in order to inspire, invite, empower, and emancipate student and educator, as well as patients.

We believe that future nursing leaders need to be prepared to function in a dynamic, high technology healthcare environment with the knowledge to optimize healthcare outcomes and decrease healthcare costs.

The fundamental beliefs identified in this Statement of Philosophy concerning Person, Nursing, and Learning expresses our values and guide the establishment of curriculum and pedagogy of teaching for the Faculty of the College of Nursing at United States University (7/2014)

Program Learning Outcomes

The Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) address the graduate programs being presented in the Self-Study and offered in the CON for review by CCNE. As depicted in the tables that follow, the PLOs are congruent with the Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs), Masters' Essentials of AACN and Nurse Practitioner Core Competencies of the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties. These PLOs also take into consideration the separately defined program outcomes for the MSN Administration, Education and the MSN-FNP specialty tracks.

Program Learning Outcomes

1. Demonstrate the ability to effectively engage in collaborative intra and inter-disciplinary relationships in the conduct of advanced nursing practice.
2. Demonstrate leadership and effective management strategies for advanced nursing practice, including proficiency in the use of information technology/technology resources to support practice and to ensure continuity of patient care.
3. Synthesize concepts and theories from nursing and related disciplines to form the basis for developing and integrating new approaches to nursing practice for the whole/healthy human being.
4. Design and implement advocacy strategies that address healthcare policies and issues of social justice and equity in healthcare.
5. Analyze socio-cultural, spiritual, ethical, economic, and political issues that influence and lead to the highest level of advanced nursing practice.
6. Utilize the process of scientific inquiry to validate and refine knowledge relevant to advanced nursing practice.
7. Demonstrate effective patient care, prevention, and population healthcare within the context of socio-economic policies, appropriate scientific data, and exigencies of the individual client.
8. Demonstrate expertise in a defined area of advanced practice and develop and articulate a vision for nursing practice in a selected environment.

Standard I

Program Quality: Mission and Governance

The mission, goals, and expected program outcomes are congruent with those of the parent institution, reflect professional nursing standards and guidelines, and consider the needs and expectations of the community of interest. Policies of the parent institution and nursing program clearly support the program's mission, goals, and expected outcomes. The faculty and students of the program are involved in the governance of the program and in the ongoing efforts to improve program quality.

I-A. The mission, goals, and expected program outcomes are:

- congruent with those of the parent institution; and
- consistent with relevant professional nursing standards and guidelines for the preparation of nursing professionals.

Elaboration: The program's mission statement, goals, and expected program outcomes are written and accessible to current and prospective students, faculty, and other constituents. Program outcomes include student outcomes, faculty outcomes, and other outcomes identified by the program. A mission statement may relate to all nursing programs offered by the nursing unit or specific programs may have separate mission statements. Program goals are clearly differentiated by level when multiple degree/certificate programs exist. Student outcomes may be expressed as competencies, objectives, benchmarks, or other terminology congruent with institutional and program norms.

The program identifies the professional nursing standards and guidelines it uses. CCNE requires, as appropriate, the following professional nursing standards and guidelines:

- *The Essentials of Baccalaureate Education for Professional Nursing Practice [American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), 2008];*
- *The Essentials of Master's Education in Nursing (AACN, 2011);*
- *The Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice (AACN, 2006); and*
- *Criteria for Evaluation of Nurse Practitioner Programs [National Task Force on Quality Nurse Practitioner Education (NTF), 2012].*

A program may select additional standards and guidelines.

A program that prepares preparing students for certification incorporates professional standards and guidelines appropriate to the role/area of education.

An APRN education program (degree or certificate) prepares students for one of the four APRN roles and in at least one population focus, in accordance with the Consensus Model for APRN Regulation: Licensure, Accreditation, Certification and Education (July 2008).

Program Response:

The United States University mission and values reflect the broad vision of the University across all colleges with a focus on professional leadership, accessible program, and a supportive learning environment.

Table 1-A-1: Mission and Values of United States University

University of United States Mission and Values
United States University provides professional and personal educational opportunities, with a special outreach to underserved groups. Through campus and online courses, the University offers affordable, relevant and accessible undergraduate and graduate degree programs and certificates in a supportive student-centered learning environment
The values define the community and are enabling the University to create a unique environment, for both internal and external stakeholders. The core values of United States University are:
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Affordability2. Quality3. Integrity4. Diversity5. Inclusiveness6. Lifelong Learning

The primary goal of an educational institution is to fulfill its mission and the current statement reflects a revision of USU’s mission to more accurately indicate the direction and vision of the University as it moves forward. The process of restating the mission included gathering comments from all faculty, staff, Board of Trustees, and community members. At this same time the core values and principles that guide USU were revised. “These values define the community and are enabling the University to create a unique environment for both internal and external stakeholders”² In addition the University initiated a period of institutional renewal highlighted by the development of a strategic planning cycle. (The USU Strategic Plan 2014-2015 can be found in Appendix 1.5). The mission and values of USU are published in print, online and in advertisements throughout the University in internal and external documents.

It is the mission of the College of Nursing to develop diverse lifelong learners grounded in Caring Science and to prepare the graduates to be innovative leaders in an ever evolving healthcare system. The CON does not have a separate strategic plan but follows the direction of the USU plan. Moving forward CON will be developing its own strategic plan with a newly appointed CON Advisory Board. The CON has established goals, implemented a SWOT Analysis of the Master’s program and established a plan to correct deficiencies in spring 2013. A renewed emphasis on planning has already been inaugurated by Dr. McLeod. Documents can be found in Appendix 3.

There is congruence between the Institutional Learning Outcomes and CON Program Outcomes for the MSN offerings. The following table depicts the congruence.

² USU Strategic Plan 2014-2015 Draft Ref (p4)

Table I-A-2.

Comparison of Institutional Learning Outcomes and CON MSN Program Learning Outcomes	
Institutional Learning Outcomes	MSN Program Outcomes
1) Communicate clearly and effectively through writing, speaking, using technology.	2) Demonstrate leadership and effective management strategies for advanced nursing practice, including proficiency in the use of information technology/technology resources to support practice and ensure continuity of patient care.
2) Apply quantitative reasoning to address complex challenges.	6) Utilize the process of scientific inquiry to validate and refine knowledge relevant to advanced nursing practice.
3) Effectively gather, analyze, and integrate information from a variety of sources.	3) Synthesize concepts and theories from nursing and related disciplines to form the basis for developing and integrating new approaches to nursing practice for the whole/healthy human being.
4) Apply critical thinking in the research and problem solving processes.	4) Design and implement advocacy strategies that address healthcare policies and issues of social justice and equity in healthcare.
5) Demonstrate ethical reasoning and actions to provide leadership as a socially responsible citizen.	5) Analyze socio-cultural, spiritual, ethical economic, and political issues that influence and lead to the highest level of advanced nursing practice
6) Work collaboratively as members and leaders of diverse teams.	1) Demonstrate the ability to effectively engage in collaborative intra and inter-disciplinary relationships in the conduct of advanced nursing practice.
7) Exhibit mastery of knowledge and skills within a discipline.	7) Demonstrate effective patient care, prevention and population healthcare within the context of socio-economic policies, appropriate scientific data, and exigencies of the individual client. 8) Demonstrate expertise in a defined area of advanced practice and develop and articulate a vision for nursing practice in a selected environment.

Professional standards that have been used as guides in the development of the MSN programs are as follows:

The Essentials of Master’s Education in Nursing - American Association of College of Nursing (AACN)

Nurse Practitioner Core Competencies-National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties (NONPF)
 Criteria for Evaluation of Nurse Practitioner Programs: National Task Force on Quality Nurse Practitioner Education-2012 (NONPF – NTF)
 Board of Registered Nursing (BRN) California Article 8 §1480-1485
 Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) (See Appendix 1.6 for copies of these professional standards.)

The following tables depict the linkages between the Program Learning Outcomes of the CON and the Master's Essentials of American Association of College of Nursing (AACN).

Table 1-A-3

AACN Masters' Essentials	CON Program Learning Outcomes
1. Background for Practice from Science and Humanities: PLO 3, 5,	1) Demonstrate the ability to effectively engage in collaborative intra and inter-disciplinary relationships in the conduct of advanced nursing practice. E 2 & 7;
2. Organizational and System Leadership: PLO 1, 2, 4, 8	2) Demonstrate leadership and effective management strategies for advanced nursing practice, including proficiency in the use of information technology/technology resources to support practice and ensure continuity of patient care. E 2 & 5 & 9
3. Quality Improvement and Safety: PLO 3, 4, 6	3) Synthesize concepts and theories from nursing and related disciplines to form the basis for developing and integrating new approaches to nursing practice for the whole/healthy human being. E-1 & 3 & 4;
4 Translating and Integrating Scholarship into Practice: PLO 3, 6, 7	4) Design and implement advocacy strategies that address healthcare policies and issues of social justice and equity in healthcare. E 2 & 3 & 6;
5. Informatics and Healthcare Technologies: PLO 2 & 5 & 8	5) Analyze socio-cultural, spiritual, ethical economic and political issues that influence and lead to the highest level of advanced nursing practice. E 1 & 5 & 6 & 9;
6. Health Policy and Advocacy: PLO 4, 5,	6) Utilize the process of scientific inquiry to validate and refine knowledge relevant to advanced nursing practice. E 3 & 4 & 8;
7. Interprofessional Collaboration for Improving Patient and Population Health Outcomes: PLO 1,7, 8	7) Demonstrate effective patient care, prevention and population healthcare within the context of socio-economic policies, appropriate scientific data, and exigencies of the individual client. E 4 & 7 & 8
8. Clinical Prevention and Population Health for Improving Health: PLO 7 & 8	8) Demonstrate expertise in a defined area of advanced practice and develop and articulate a vision for nursing practice in a selected environment E 2 & 5 & 7 & 8 & 9;
9. Master's-Level Nursing Practice PLO 1,& 2 & 4 & 7 & 8	
Legend: E1-9 = AACN Essential	Program Learning Outcome = PLO 1-8

The Program Learning Outcomes reflect the NONPF Competencies as demonstrated in the following table.

Table I-A-4

NONPF Competencies	Program Learning Outcomes
1) Scientific Foundations: Critically analyzes; Integrates scientific and humanities; Translates research; Develops new practice approaches.	1) Demonstrate the ability to effectively engage in collaborative intra and inter-disciplinary relationships in the conduct of advanced nursing practice. NC 1, 2, 5, 6, 9
2) Leadership: Assumes advanced roles; Provides leadership and collaborates; Uses critical thinking; Advocates for access; Participates in professional organizations.	2) Demonstrate leadership and effective management strategies for advanced nursing practice, including proficiency in the use of information technology/technology resources to support practice and ensure continuity of patient care. NC 2, 4, 7, 8, 9
3) Quality: Uses evidence to continue to improve; Evaluates relationships among cost, access, quality and safety; Evaluates organizational structure; Anticipates variations in practice.	3) Synthesize concepts and theories from nursing and related disciplines to form the basis for developing and integrating new approaches to nursing practice for the whole/healthy human being. NC 1, 4, 7, 8, 9
4) Practice Inquiry: Provides leadership; Generates knowledge from practice; Leads practice inquiry; Analyzes clinical guidelines.	4) Design and implement advocacy strategies that address healthcare policies and issues of social justice and equity in healthcare NC 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9
5) Technology and Information Literacy: Integrates appropriate technologies; Translates technical information; Demonstrates information literacy; Uses technology systems.	5) Analyze socio-cultural, spiritual, ethical economic and political issues that influence and lead to the highest level of advanced nursing practice. NC 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9
6) Policy: Demonstrate understanding of policy and practice; Advocates for ethical policy; Contributes to development of health policy; Analyzes implications of health policy.	6) Utilize the process of scientific inquiry to validate and refine knowledge relevant to advanced nursing practice. NC 1, 3, 4, 5, 9
7) Health Delivery System: Applies knowledge of organizational practices; Minimizes risk to patients; Evaluates impact of healthcare delivery on patients; Collaborates in planning and transitions.	7) Demonstrate effective patient care, prevention and population healthcare within the context of socio-economic policies, appropriate scientific data, and exigencies of the individual client. NC 1, 5, 7, 9
8) Ethics: Integrates ethical principles in d-m; Evaluates ethical consequences; Applies ethical solutions.	8) Demonstrate expertise in a defined area of advanced practice and develop and articulate a vision for nursing practice in a selected environment NC 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9
9) Independent Practice: Demonstrates highest level of accountability; Practices independently; Diagnose and manage patient health needs.	
Legend: NC=NONPF Competency	

Nursing is the most popular discipline at USU and offers one of the longest running programs in the institution. The CON enrolls the most students with both on-ground and online graduate programs. The Student Learning Outcomes for the Masters programs are found in the course syllabi and also addressed in Standard III.

I-B. The mission, goals, and expected student outcomes are reviewed periodically and revised, as appropriate, to reflect:

- professional nursing standards and guidelines; and
- the needs and expectations of the community of interest.

Elaboration: There is a defined process for periodic review and revision of program mission, goals, and expected student outcomes. The review process has been implemented and resultant action reflects professional nursing standards and guidelines. The nursing unit defines the community of interest. The needs and expectations of the community of interest are reflected in the mission, goals, and expected student outcomes. Input from the community of interest is used to foster program improvement.

Program Response:

The CON program has had periodic reviews and revisions of the mission, goals, and expected student outcomes as documented in materials and minutes of the faculty meetings. In 2013, USU began an institution wide schedule of evaluation of programs at which time a 5 year plan for program review was established. Meetings were held in 2014 where components of evaluation were discussed, tested, and analyzed. A reassessment is currently taking place with implementation to occur in fall of this year. As a result, every program has a General Education mapping matrix of courses and PLOs of the Masters programs in the CON. As another part of the USU Strategic Plan, the following guide has been developed to implement a regular process: the “Program Review and Learning Outcome Assessment Manual”, which was approved by the Faculty Senate in 2014. (This can be found in Appendix 1.7).

Comprehensive reviews of the CON programs did take place as the Board of Registered Nurses mandated them. The accrediting and approving bodies required revisions, and there was a scaling up of the goals and outcomes based on standards, guidelines, and current practice in the community. For example, the site visits by the BRN identified compliance issues that demanded the program goals be reviewed and aligned to the national standards. Documentation can be reviewed in the BRN binders located on site. The community of interest for the online MSN and FNP programs responded to course evaluations where feedback addressed the expectations and need for change. The FNP program has maintained paper/pencil methods for course, faculty, and clinical experience evaluations and binders are available for review on site. A determination has been made to enhance opportunities for student input in the review process.

I-C. Expected faculty outcomes are clearly identified by the nursing unit, are written and communicated to the faculty, and are congruent with institutional expectations.

Elaboration: The nursing unit identifies expectations for faculty, whether in teaching, scholarship, service, practice, or other areas. Expected faculty outcomes are congruent with those of the parent institution.

Program Response:

Faculty expectations are institutionally established by USU, as USU publishes a handbook that is available to all faculty, core, and affiliate, adjunct, and visiting. The

type of faculty and the responsibilities for each are set out in this document. The organizations for faculty involvement in the governance of USU are identified, scope of work of each is described, and membership and process of operation is included.

The workload is defined in domains for core faculty and adjunct faculty that encompass governance, teaching and advising, scholarship, professional development, and community service. The development of a faculty portfolio is addressed, as well as the review process and its use in reappointment and promotion. Rank of faculty and the expectations for each level are present in the handbook. Below is an excerpt from the University Faculty Handbook that addresses the expectations of all faculty. The handbook was most recently updated and approved by the Faculty Senate June 26, 2014 and a draft copy can be found in Appendix 1.8. The revised edition will be available on site for review by the visitors.

Expectations from Faculty

In addition to providing quality academic teaching, full-time faculty are:

1. Expected to keep current in their field
2. Encouraged to attend professional development workshops and programs
3. Encouraged to participate and present at professional meetings
4. Encouraged to submit papers for publication in proceedings and/or professional journals

Faculty development will be a strong focus of the new administration of the CON.

I-D. Faculty and students participate in program governance.

Elaboration: Roles of the faculty and students in the governance of the program, including those involved in distance education, are clearly defined and promote participation. Nursing faculty are involved in the development, review, and revision of academic program policies.

Program Response:

Participation in program governance by faculty (now numbering four in addition to a newly hired clinical coordinator) and students has taken place as documented in the minutes and attendance records of the different committees of USU and the CON. In the CON, telephonic and web based technology has encouraged participation especially by a relatively large number of adjunct faculty. The continual program development has also demanded faculty contribution to this ongoing process. It must be recognized that USU and the CON are small, yet employ a large number of adjunct faculty who teach in the colleges.

Faculty attendance and participation at university meetings is strongly recommended by USU administration. Student involvement has been encouraged and the Dean of the CON established a specific grouping in 2012. The Paradigm Group was formed to encourage students, faculty, and administrators to become more involved in open discussion on issues of need. However, since nursing programs of study are designed for working students, their attendance at meetings remains lower than desired levels. The use of multi-media technology has facilitated a greater connection with students, as documented by the student advisor, who indicated improved trends in communication. (Materials on site for review)

I-E. Documents and publications are accurate. A process is used to notify constituents about changes in documents and publications.

Elaboration: References to the program's offerings, outcomes, accreditation/approval status, academic calendar, recruitment and admission policies, grading policies, degree/certificate completion requirements, tuition, and fees are accurate. Information regarding licensure and/or certification examinations for which graduates will be eligible is accurate. For APRN education programs, transcripts or other official documentation specify the APRN role and population focus of the graduate.^{3,4}

If a program chooses to publicly disclose its CCNE accreditation status, the program uses either of the following statements:

"The (baccalaureate degree in nursing/master's degree in nursing/Doctor of Nursing Practice and/or post-graduate APRN certificate) at (institution) is accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 530, Washington, DC 20036, 202-887-6791."

"The (baccalaureate degree in nursing/master's degree in nursing/Doctor of Nursing Practice and/or post-graduate APRN certificate) at (institution) is accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (<http://www.aacn.nche.edu/ccne-accreditation>)."

Program Response:

All publications, hard copy and electronic, are accurate and are reviewed and updated regularly. The USU catalog is the central document and contains the information for all colleges and programs, the expected outcomes, admission and grading policies, academic calendar and student services and grievance policies and processes. The process for notifying constituents of changes is through published notices in hard copy and electronic messaging as required. The office of Compliance and Regulatory Affairs has the responsibility of notifying the necessary parties of any changes that occur in between the editing of updated publications.

The catalog is available online, as well as in print. Licensure data concerning the BRN for the MSN-FNP program is on the website (<http://www.usuniversity.edu/downloads/USU%20MSN-FNP%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>) in the Fact Sheet and available to interested parties. (Fact Sheet Appendix 1.9)

I-F. Academic policies of the parent institution and the nursing program are congruent and support achievement of the mission, goals, and expected student outcomes. These policies are:

- fair and equitable;
- published and accessible; and
- reviewed and revised as necessary to foster program improvement.

³ *Consensus Model for APRN Regulation: Licensure, Accreditation, Certification and Education (July 2008).*

⁴ *Criteria for Evaluation of Nurse Practitioner Programs (National Task Force on Quality Nurse Practitioner Education, 2012).*

Elaboration: Academic policies include, but are not limited to, those related to student recruitment, admission, retention, and progression. Policies are written and communicated to relevant constituencies. Policies are implemented consistently. Differences between the nursing program policies and those of the parent institution are identified and support achievement of the program's mission, goals, and expected student outcomes. A defined process exists by which policies are regularly reviewed. Policy review occurs and revisions are made as needed.

Program Response:

The policies of the parent institution, USU, and the CON are one and the same. The size of the parent institution and the nursing program does not require a separate set of policies at this time. The policies presented in the USU Catalog and Faculty Handbook demonstrate fairness, equity, and are published and available to all requesting the information. The Catalog is reviewed annually. The Faculty Handbook is reviewed on a regular basis. The most recent USU Catalog was updated in spring 2014. See the USU website <http://www.usuniversity.edu/> to review the Catalog. (A hard copy will be available on site.)

Standard I: Summary of Strengths, Challenges and Action Plans

1. Strengths

The evolution of USU, remains ongoing. It is, however, emerging as a fiscally energized and administratively strong institution with a mission to provide quality and affordable education for a constituency of students who are predominantly working professionals of underserved groups. A premise of the original institution noted the support for these students through the Hispanic concept of family (family). (Appendix 1.10). This is best described as an institution of mentors, or supportive teachers, and colleagues. USU represents this environment.

2. Challenges

The strength of USU is the state of introspection and actions that begun in 2012 with a new President, followed by a new and highly qualified administrative management team. This administration has addressed the standards and expectations of WASC and other accrediting/approving bodies to improve the quality and service of the institution and programs. The expressed observations and recommendations in the report by WASC in May 2014 (Appendix 1) support this advancement. Among commendations expressed by the visiting team were praise for a commitment to process improvements, adherence to the strategic plan, and the creation of an engaged governing board. Among current board members is the former USU Dean of the College of Nursing who now serves as the Director, Central California Center for Excellence in Nursing at Fresno State University. The realignment of an active Board of Trustees, and the backing of new ownership has also added support to the mission and goals of USU. The CON has embarked on this Self-Study for accreditation with a new qualified administrator and additional faculty who are rapidly addressing the needs of the College and will undertake the operation and management of programs in place. Work has already begun and a plan for necessary change is being developed and acted upon.

3. Action Plans

Challenges remaining at USU and CON are attaining and sustaining a strong financial base, assuring consistency with national/regional standards of WASC, CCNE, BRN, among others. Moving forward by increasing student enrollment as well as faculty, building a stronger community of interest, and contributing to the institution's process of governance are also part of the task. Addressing student needs has begun with an evaluation and improvement of the services. Continued participation by the CON on the USU committee that is focused on program evaluation at the university level must be maintained. The review and revision of the mission, the expectations of faculty, students, and staff of the CON are areas of concentration of the new administrator and faculty. The actions for review and revision began in June 2014 and are being planned for the following year. The Mission, Philosophy, and PLOs of the CON have been addressed, approved, and are part of this Self-Study.

Standard II

Program Quality: Institutional Commitment and Resources

The parent institution demonstrates ongoing commitment to and support for the nursing program. The institution makes resources available to enable the program to achieve its mission, goals, and expected outcomes. The faculty, as a resource of the program, enable the achievement of the mission, goals, and expected program outcomes.

II-A. Fiscal and physical resources are sufficient to enable the program to fulfill its mission, goals, and expected outcomes. Adequacy of resources is reviewed periodically and resources are modified as needed.

Elaboration: The budget enables achievement of the program's mission, goals, and expected outcomes. The budget also supports the development, implementation, and evaluation of the program. Compensation of nursing unit personnel supports recruitment and retention of qualified faculty and staff. Physical space is sufficient and configured in ways that enable the program to achieve its mission, goals, and expected outcomes. Equipment and supplies (e.g., computing, laboratory, and teaching-learning) are sufficient to achieve the program's mission, goals, and expected outcomes.

A defined process is used for regular review of the adequacy of the program's fiscal and physical resources. Review of fiscal and physical resources occurs and improvements are made as appropriate.

Program Response:

The fiscal resources enable achievement of the CON program's mission, goals, and expected student and faculty outcomes. The sources of income are from student tuition and fees and owner/sponsor investments. The budgetary categories can be sorted into salaries, operating expenses, and overhead. The infusion of new funds into USU came with a commitment from the new owner/sponsor to work with the institution to bring it into a secure financial position. Information can be found in WASC's Report on the Structural Change Site Visit in May 2014 is available in Standard I-Appendix 1.

The process of reviewing and approving the budget is straight forward. The Dean of the CON submits a budget for the upcoming calendar year in the fall of each year. The budget is reviewed by the Dean and the Provost and then sent to the CFO who reviews and makes recommendations for any changes. The budget then goes to the President who then reviews what has been submitted by the CFO and discusses any potential changes with the management team of USU. The President then sends the budget with recommendations to the Board of Trustees for approval. The budget is then set for 12 months on a calendar year cycle. If an unexpected major expense arises in between budget submission dates, a direct request goes to the Provost who ensures that the CFO and President have sufficient information to make an informed decision. Budgeting takes into consideration the enrollment and program needs when allocating funds for support and resources. Revenue and expenditures, are closely monitored by the management team and Board of Trustees. (Budgets for three annual cycles, 2013, 2014 and a projected budget for 2015 can be found in Appendix 2.1.

An example of USU's support of the CON was providing consultation for both the undergraduate and graduate curricula when the CON faculty was attempting to meet the rules and regulations of the BRN during program development. Support of the parent organization is also demonstrated in providing added adjunct and core faculty when enrollment increases beyond projected numbers. Additionally, at the request of the Dean new faculty members have been hired to aggressively address the identified need for program modifications and revisions.

The facility is new, spacious, and provides adequate space to achieve program goals and expected outcomes. There is a learning laboratory for graduate and undergraduate students to learn and practice their skills. A computer lab and a secured proctor testing area are also available for student learning. There are numerous classrooms available for on-ground classes and a large auditorium with stadium seating. The faculty have office space in one large room divided into cubicles and supplied with electronic office equipment and an Administrative Assistant. Conferences with students can be held in the adjacent nursing conference room when privacy is required. If the conference room is in use there are numerous other classrooms and a conference room available for this purpose. The University is committed to additional space for faculty offices, simulation labs, and the most up to date technology as the CON expands faculty and students.

Table II-A-1 Facilities available to CON

Type of Resource	Number
Auditorium	106 seats
Classrooms	10 (6 used by the CON)
Clinical Laboratory	1
Computer Classroom	1
Conference Rooms	2
Secured Proctor Testing Area	1

II-B. Academic support services are sufficient to ensure quality and are evaluated on a regular basis to meet program and student needs.

Elaboration: Academic support services (e.g., library, technology, distance education support, research support, admission, and advising services) are adequate for students and faculty to meet program requirements and to achieve the mission, goals, and expected program outcomes. There is a defined process for regular review of the adequacy of the program's academic support services. Review of academic support services occurs and improvements are made as appropriate.

Program Response:

The USU support services combined with those provided by the CON are sufficient to ensure quality of the academic programs. A description of the USU support services is available in the Catalog 2014-2015, as well as online. Admissions work with incoming students for the first two weeks to help them adjust to the new environment of the learning community. In the third week a student advocate assumes responsibilities for

student support. Numerous student support services can be reviewed on the website of USU under the student section. Among available services are Smarthinking. Tutoring, career services, and additional support services are routinely available at the main campus. These services are evaluated using a questionnaire of student satisfaction and a report from a recent survey can be found in Appendix 2.2. This review compares 2013 with 2014 data and it is obvious in many areas of the students' views that an improvement has been made by the institution. This is a good demonstration of administration's response to the identified need and the Strategic Plan being implemented.

Library:

The physical placement of the library is adjacent to the office and laboratory of the nursing unit. It is bright, compact, and presents a welcoming atmosphere. The main library website can be accessed through <http://www.usuniversity.edu/library/>. This site contains general information of services, frequently asked questions, and contact information for reaching the Librarian. The physical library is open 5 days (M-F) a week, the first Saturday of every month, and is available in the evenings. The second access point through the website search link will give you another means of accessing the holdings and online databases. The Librarian provides direction on the resources available to the students to incoming students at orientation or on request of a faculty member. One-on-one attention to access and use of the online databases and navigation through these resources is also available. Use of the library and databases has been charted for review and can be found in Appendix 2.3 of the Self-Study.

The data and holdings of the library can also be accessed by <http://www.usuniversity.edu/library/library-resources-by-college/full-text-database-nursing/>). The information collected on the use of each database represents an evaluative measure to maintain or withdraw support for continuation of these online resources. The report provides database usage statistics between 2010-2014 for Medline, Cinahl Plus, ProQuest Nursing, Allied Health Source, and PsycArticles. Some sites make available full text articles. The Academic Search Premier database provides 1,715 active titles in the area of Health and Medicine. Journals indexed are filtered by Active Titles, Suspended Titles, Titles with embargo (Publisher allows to be indexed after 6-12 months), peer reviewed articles, and magazines. The Nursing Book Collection lists three collections: Faculty Only, Faculty Desk Copy, and Videos. The USU library is a setting that exemplifies a positive learning environment, and provides a welcoming environment for community members.

Learning Laboratory:

The laboratory for nursing skills is a modern bright room, equipped with manikins, curtained examination cubicles and necessary equipment for a cohort of students to learn the art and science of Physical Assessment. With the size of the room the faculty often hold the didactic part of class in this setting with direct access to demonstration for skills and techniques. The equipment is adequate for cohorts up to 20 students with two faculty for supervision. Students may use the lab with or without a faculty member

present to practice their skills on their own time schedule. Hours are posted and information to access the lab is also posted.

Computer Classroom and Online Service:

The computer classroom provides an opportunity for students to enroll in classes if necessary, to improve their skills in technology. In the graduate MSN Administration program, new technologies are taught and the use of electronic record keeping is just one example of how this classroom could be used by faculty and nursing students. Online classes is another technology that is used for student support and service. Up to September 2014, a system known as Next Generation Learning (NGL) had been the platform for online instruction. This is an example of a recent evaluation and upgrade of student services. Due to the deficiency of the old system, a new user-friendly system will be in use on September 2, 2014. Pearson Open Class will become the new system used by USU. This system has added support for students both in on-ground classes, as well as online classes. Smartthinking is just one example of an added student support service. This will be available 24/7 to students as an online access to resources at USU. Live coverage for online students is Monday through Saturday from 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM. Orientation to these services is provided by the Advisor for Nursing students, as well as the Librarian.

An annual class schedule is generated by the Dean of the CON and provides the basis for the educational advising in the progression for students in the Masters programs. In addition, each graduate nursing student is counseled by the program faculty and/or nursing advisor for the CON to assure correct information and follow up of issues or needs of the students. The FNP program also generates a handbook with a discussion of the specific needs for that program such as; course descriptions, evaluation forms, and information specific to nurse preceptor and student engagement in that process. (See Appendix 2.4 for the MSN-FNP Handbook.)

The institution supports the CON through the subscriptions or licensing of software used by the MSN program. Project Concern is one example of this type of support. It has been used to facilitate the FNP students to record data on their clinical experiences, patient encounters and reflective experiences. The program allows additional data to be collected, collated, and reported under a secure system. There are plans to use this method for evaluation of the learning outcomes in the coming semesters.

II-C. The chief nurse administrator:

- is a registered nurse (RN);
- holds a graduate degree in nursing;
- holds a doctoral degree if the nursing unit offers a graduate program in nursing;
- is academically and experientially qualified to accomplish the mission, goals, and expected program outcomes;
- is vested with the administrative authority to accomplish the mission, goals, and expected program outcomes; and
- provides effective leadership to the nursing unit in achieving its mission, goals, and expected program outcomes.

Elaboration: The administrative authority of the chief nurse administrator is comparable to that of chief administrators of similar units in the institution. He or she consults, as appropriate, with faculty and other communities of interest to make decisions to accomplish the mission, goals, and expected program outcomes. The chief nurse administrator is perceived by the communities of interest to be an effective leader of the nursing unit. The program provides a rationale and a plan to come into compliance if the chief nurse administrator does not hold a graduate degree in nursing and a doctoral degree (if applicable).

Program Response:

The chief nurse administrator for the College of Nursing is the Dean, Dr. Renee McLeod. Dr. McLeod has a PhD in Nursing Education from Widener University with an emphasis in Curriculum Design and Administration. She has been both teaching and precepting students since 1976 at a variety of universities, as she moved every two years with her husband who was in the Navy. In addition, Dr. McLeod has been a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner in practice since 1976 and maintains an active practice in San Diego. Previously, Dr. McLeod was the Founding Dean of the Maribelle and S. Paul Musco School of Nursing and Health Professions at Brandman University. At Brandman University, she developed a visionary online hybrid Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program that included a BSN to DNP in five specialty areas including a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner, Acute Care, Neonatal Nurse Practitioner, Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner, Adult-Gerontology Primary Care Nurse Practitioner, and a Family Psychiatric and Mental Health Nurse Practitioner program. She also developed a one year RN to BSN program and a Master of Healthcare Innovation degree. Dr. McLeod took the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree before WASC for approval and then received approval from the Board. These programs received initial CCNE approval for five years. She was the Director of Graduate Education and Advanced Practice Programs in the College of Nursing & Healthcare Innovation at Arizona State University where she was in charge of developing the DNP curriculum and program and taking it to the Board of Regents for approval. Dr. McLeod has also served as the consultant on several Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) grants for other universities developing DNP programs. She is an internationally recognized expert in the area of handheld point of action technology to advance interdisciplinary education of healthcare professionals and to support evidence-based practice. Dr. McLeod has specialized in pediatric dermatology in the primary care and school setting for the last 20 years and is a frequently requested consultant, and presenter nationally and internationally. In addition, she has served as National President and National Clinical Practice Chair for the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP).

The Dean of the College of Nursing has full budgetary, decision-making and evaluation authority for the College. She meets weekly with the Provost. The Deans also meet bi-weekly where information is shared, and academic decisions are made across schools. Curriculum, budgetary, and faculty workload issues are brought before this committee for review. This committee also provides a support group of peers to assist with budget, faculty, and student concerns that face the Dean's in each of the colleges.

The Dean of the College of Nursing has developed a team approach to the administration of the College. There is a Program Director for each program and a

collaborative working relationship modeled after a Caring Science Philosophy. The Dean plans to hold weekly virtual faculty meetings where the business of the College is discussed and decisions are made by the entire team. The Dean has ultimate authority, but rarely makes a decision without consulting all of the Program Directors. The Program Directors are all full-time faculty members and supervise and evaluate any adjunct faculty teaching in their programs. Workload is negotiated at the beginning of each year between the faculty and the Dean and then approved by the Provost. (See Appendix 2.5 for Dr. McLeod's Curriculum Vita).

II-D. Faculty are:

- sufficient in number to accomplish the mission, goals, and expected program outcomes;
- academically prepared for the areas in which they teach; and
- experientially prepared for the areas in which they teach.

Elaboration: The full-time equivalency (FTE) of faculty involved in each program is clearly delineated, and the program provides to CCNE its formula for calculating FTEs. The overall faculty (whether full-time or part-time) is sufficient in number and qualifications to achieve the mission, goals, and expected program outcomes. Faculty-to-student ratios ensure adequate supervision and evaluation and meet or exceed the requirements of regulatory agencies and professional nursing standards and guidelines.

Faculty are academically prepared for the areas in which they teach. Academic preparation of faculty includes degree specialization, specialty coursework, or other preparation sufficient to address the major concepts included in courses they teach. Faculty teaching in the nursing program have a graduate degree. The program provides a rationale for the use of any faculty who do not have a graduate degree.

Faculty who are nurses hold current RN licensure. Faculty teaching in clinical/practicum courses are experienced in the clinical area of the course and maintain clinical expertise. Clinical expertise may be maintained through clinical practice or other avenues. Faculty teaching in advanced practice clinical courses meet certification and practice requirements as specified by the relevant regulatory and specialty bodies. Advanced practice nursing tracks are directly overseen by faculty who are nationally certified in that same population-focused area of practice in roles for which national certification is available.

Program Response:

Full-time core faculty in the CON had been few in number. All however, were fully qualified by academic degree, national certification, and experience to accomplish the mission, goals and expected outcomes of the MSN programs. Since its inception, USU has been adherent to the scholar-practitioner model and has viewed faculty experience in the professional field in which they teach being essential. In late July 2014, the CON was allowed to expand the number of faculty by four positions. New faculty are anticipated to fill these positions in the fall, 2014 semester. These new faculty will increase core faculty to seven (five full-time and two half-time) plus the new Dean. There are 13 adjunct faculty who teach in the undergraduate, graduate, and online programs offered by the CON. Previously, two of the core faculty also held administrative roles in the MSN programs and served as Assistant Dean of the CON and Director of the MSN-FNP track. With incoming faculty possessing the qualifications to teach, mentor, evaluate and supervise the FNP students, faculty assignments will be adjusted. The prior Director of the MSN-FNP program has elected to remain as a

teaching faculty in the MSN-FNP program but move to adjunct status. Her continued involvement assures a high degree of continuity. Other faculty are expressing their desires for workload and full-time or part-time status. Online faculty are recruited and evaluated by the Dean and the status of retaining or non-reappointment takes place in the spring of the calendar year. (See Appendix 2.6 for a list of faculty data).

It is the responsibility of the Dean to orientate all faculty to their role, responsibilities, and expectations for participation in CON programs, faculty governance, professional development and community service as set out in the USU Faculty Handbook. The formula for calculating FTE's can also be found in Chapter 5 of this document. The Faculty Handbook is due to be published in August 2014. Faculty workload has been systemized and in the CON it is as follows:

1. Adjunct faculty may teach three courses per session
2. Core faculty at all ranks will teach two courses per session with release time for administration or other assigned duties. It is recognized that a course with clinical rotations is counted as one course.

Assignments are made by the Dean of the CON prior to the start of the first session in the fall of the calendar year.

Administration confirmed that faculty salaries for FY 2012-2013 revealed USU CON's median salary, based on rank, highest degree and calendar year, was generally higher than the corresponding median salary in the AACN survey data of the same year.⁵³ The faculty in the CON is also above the median range at USU due to the salaries of similar nurse colleagues found in the community of interest in the surrounding area.

Beginning in fall of 2014, the faculty will move to the ranking system most commonly found in institutions of higher education. This ranking system will be implemented through the Office of the Provost in discussion with faculty members of each college at USU. This transition to a faculty ranking system supports the need to perform an annual faculty outcomes review of each faculty member. This review process establishes an effective model for faculty to review their professional goals and development annually, as well as an important step in pursuing advancement within the institution. The process and requirements for each rank are clearly stated in the Faculty Handbook.

Full-time core faculty in the CON are prepared at the appropriate educational level and hold required certification. Several of the adjunct faculty hold their terminal degrees. Additionally, faculty have a varied range in their level of preparation and expertise. The recruitment of qualified faculty is the responsibility of the Dean of CON. Working with USU's administrative support, faculty are recruited, interviewed, vetted, approved by the Provost and then hired. In the past, administrators were able to employ the necessary faculty with the qualifications in specialty areas as required by the BRN for all programs or support new faculty in the approved remediation process to meet these qualifications.

³ Fang, D., Li, Y., Bednash, G.D. (2013) *2012-2013 Salaries of Instructional and Administrative Nursing Faculty in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing*. Washington, DC: American Association of Colleges of Nursing.⁵

Retention of qualified faculty has been a concern. One example of faculty longevity in the CON that demonstrates commitment to USU is by a member of the current faculty. This faculty member worked as a beginning instructor, continued her education and has served in an administrative role in the CON. The CON remains committed to the recruitment and retention of a cadre of outstanding scholar practitioners.

All faculty are licensed, teaching in their area of specialization, certified, have expertise and are clinically competent in their role. The MSN program faculty all continue to practice clinically while maintaining a full time faculty role. Faculty position descriptions are available for all administrative and teaching positions in the CON. These can be reviewed on site.

II-E. Preceptors, when used by the program as an extension of faculty, are academically and experientially qualified for their role in assisting in the achievement of the mission, goals, and expected student outcomes.

Elaboration: The roles of preceptors with respect to teaching, supervision, and student evaluation are:

- *clearly defined;*
- *congruent with the mission, goals, and expected student outcomes; and*
- *congruent with relevant professional nursing standards and guidelines.*

Preceptors have the expertise to support student achievement of expected outcomes. Preceptor performance expectations are clearly communicated to preceptors and are reviewed periodically. The program ensures preceptor performance meets expectations.

Program Response:

The preceptors are all qualified and certified Nurse Practitioners or Physicians who teach, mentor, supervise, and evaluate the students. Clinical placements range from nearby to distant communities where the enrolled students reside. All preceptors are within the borders of the USA. Students enter their clinical experience with learning goals and objectives that can be accomplished in the identified setting. Each student progresses through four clinical practical courses and is supervised by a preceptor. In the clinical setting, the preceptor orients the student to the processes, procedures, and assists in selecting patients/clients who will allow them to meet their learning objectives. The setting serves as a learning environment for a minimum of 8 weeks and can extend to a full 16 weeks, or two sessions, depending on the learning needs and capacity of the clinical setting.

A preceptorship manual has been developed and is used to orient new individuals to the role of being a preceptor and the expectations of the CON. The process of selection is identified in the manual. The document is presented and reviewed as part of the orientation of a new preceptor. It is the role of the Director of the FNP program to orient and assign enrolled students, and conduct evaluation visits of the students in the preceptor setting. With incoming faculty possessing the qualifications to teach, mentor, evaluate and supervise the FNP students, faculty assignments will most likely be adjusted. A student can suggest a potential preceptor who meets the qualifications and is willing to mentor the student in his or her clinical experiences. This facilitates

identifying qualified professionals in distant locations. The faculty meets and evaluates students on a scheduled basis of twice in a 16-week cycle. (See Appendix 2.7 for Preceptor Manual)

II-F. The parent institution and program provide and support an environment that encourages faculty teaching, scholarship, service, and practice in keeping with the mission, goals, and expected faculty outcomes.

Elaboration: Institutional support is available to promote faculty outcomes congruent with defined expectations of the faculty role and in support of the mission, goals, and expected faculty outcomes. For example:

- *Faculty have opportunities for ongoing development in the scholarship of teaching.*
- *If scholarship is an expected faculty outcome, the institution provides resources to support faculty scholarship.*
- *If practice is an expected faculty outcome, opportunities are provided for faculty to maintain practice competence, and institutional support ensures that currency in clinical practice is maintained for faculty in roles that require it.*
- *If service is an expected faculty outcome, expected service is clearly defined and supported.*

Program Response:

USU has developed an environment of learning on campus, as well as online. Knowledge is Empowerment – the branded maxim of USU presents each student with the mind set of becoming engaged and acquiring knowledge in a learning atmosphere. The institution provides support for on-site and online students in the areas addressed previously and identified in Student Services on the website. The faculty are present, supportive and assist the students in the CON via the Student Advisor/Advocate and individually with issues both academic and non-academic. Personnel are friendly, helpful and attuned to needs of the enrolled students.

The faculty expectations, support services for teaching, scholarship, service, and practice are clearly delineated in the Faculty Handbook found in Appendix 8. The most important Faculty role remains teaching, the faculty must be of sufficient number and ratio to be effective in the classroom on ground or online. At this time, the cohorts of students are small as the possible result of the flexible and frequent admission policy in place for the institution. This supports the use of fewer core faculty on-site and increased adjunct faculty able to teach in their area of specialization when necessary. When USU offers faculty development workshops, all faculty are invited to join in these sessions and receive current updated information on scholarships, service, and community involvement. (See Appendix 2.8 for Faculty Workshop Materials)

USU has offered faculty workshops and consultation on improving teaching, program evaluation and development of critical thinking skills. Plans for continued faculty development can also be submitted by individual faculty as part of their annual review process. Merit increases will also be available to individual faculty who apply and meet the criteria. Practice is an important component for each Advanced Practice Registered Nurse and all faculty teaching in the CON have a practice site to facilitate their continued competence and skills and meet national certification requirements. The new Faculty Handbook addresses the areas of teaching and scholarship, practice, and

community involvement as USU moves forward with implementation of its emerging Strategic Plan.

Summary of Standard II: Strengths, Challenges, and Action Plans

Strengths: The emerging fiscal strength of USU has allowed the CON to achieve the program's mission and goals and to advance in its mission. The CON has a new Dean and additional faculty positions have been approved with new members joining the institution before the fall session begins. The Strategic Plan is being enacted and demonstrating changes in the quality of the institution and staff while benefitting all the enrolled students. There is adequate space for class, laboratory, and conferencing activities. Academic support services for the USU enrolled students have improved in multiple areas as documented by a student satisfaction survey completed in summer 2014. Other resources such as the library, computer classroom, and laboratory all provide opportunities for students to learn and achieve their educational goals. Guidance for faculty to transition into a common ranking system will occur in the coming semesters. The faculty in the CON is a strength of the institution as they have maintained standards of quality education. Faculty in the CON are paid at higher rates than the median salaries of comparable rank and degree as reported in the AANC data. The publishing of the updated Faculty Handbook which was approved by the Faculty Senate and Board of Trustees will allow faculty to be informed on all the new adjustments that have taken place as a result of the Strategic Plan becoming an active part of the learning environment at USU.

Challenges:

Continuing to improve student services and faculty resources, as outlined in the Strategic Plan, while managing fiscal resources and following through with plans for growth and development of USU, will present a challenge. Enrolling and retaining students in the programs is another challenge that colleges of USU faces. The CON has several inconsistencies with rules, regulations, and standards to rectify to maintain and sustain the programs in place while improving the quality of student learning experience.

Action Plans:

USU will continue to develop the Institutional Research (IR) capacity for internal academic and administrative decision making and reporting. The upgrading of computer and internet access that will be put in place prior to the fall session will require orientation of staff and faculty to fully utilize the programs. The CON with new faculty positions filled will need to address the inconsistencies identified through the Self-Study process and establish a timeline to accomplish the tasks while continuing to operate the programs in place.

Standard III

Program Quality: Curriculum and Teaching-Learning Practices

The curriculum is developed in accordance with the program's mission, goals, and expected student outcomes. The curriculum reflects professional nursing standards and guidelines and the needs and expectations of the community of interest. Teaching-learning practices are congruent with expected student outcomes. The environment for teaching-learning fosters achievement of expected student outcomes.

III-A. The curriculum is developed, implemented, and revised to reflect clear statements of expected student outcomes that are congruent with the program's mission and goals, and with the roles for which the program is preparing its graduates.

Elaboration: Curricular objectives (e.g., course, unit, and/or level objectives or competencies as identified by the program) provide clear statements of expected learning that relate to student outcomes. Expected outcomes relate to the roles for which students are being prepared.

Program Response:

The CON has a Master of Science Degree with three tracks: Family Nurse Practitioner, Nursing Administration, and Nursing Educator. For all three programs, students must have completed a BSN and be licensed as an RN. The curricula for each program were developed, implemented, and revised to reflect clear statements of individual student learning outcomes that are congruent with the program's mission, goals, and roles for which the program is preparing graduates. Each Master's program has clearly stated program outcomes that articulate the expectations of graduates. Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) link to program outcomes for the appropriate Master's program and are detailed in the objectives for each course. Appendix 3.1 presents program and concentration outcomes for the Master's program (**Standard III, Folder1, in Resource Room**).

In conducting the Self-Study, we identified that the Master's configuration should be one Master's program with three tracks rather than three Master's programs. The new Dean is aware that the Master's program must be reconfigured to be consistent with CCNE Standards and that program outcomes must be revised so that there is one set of outcomes for the Master's program.

The Master's programs offer bachelor's-prepared nurses the opportunity to continue their education and assume leadership in advanced clinical practice (FNP), nursing administration, and nursing education. In addition to leadership, the Masters' prepared nurse is expected to articulate positions on issues that affect healthcare, lead quality improvement initiatives, work in inter-professional teams, and translate evidence into practice. The MSN curriculum for all three concentrations is designed to foster student achievement of program outcomes. SLO's in each course guide the learning activities and evaluation methods. Each course builds on knowledge and/or skills developed in previous course work. In the FNP concentration, students first learn about health promotion and then learn advanced pathophysiology and management of common illness. Appendices 3.2 and 3.3 display the course sequencing for the Nursing Administration and Education concentrations and the FNP concentration, respectively (**Standard III, Folder 1 in the Resource Room**).

As part of the Self-Study process, all of the course Student Learning Outcomes were reviewed for consistency with course title and description, redundancy with others courses and alignment with AACN Master's Essentials. This analysis revealed that some elements of the Master's Essentials were not robustly congruent with the Master's Essentials and curriculum revision is currently being planned. Specifically, content on informatics in healthcare, inter-professional teams, and patient-centered care needs to be enhanced in the nursing administration and education concentrations. Genetics and genomics content needs to be enhanced in all three concentrations.

- III-B. Curricula are developed, implemented, and revised to reflect relevant professional nursing standards and guidelines, which are clearly evident within the curriculum and within the expected student outcomes (individual and aggregate).
- Baccalaureate program curricula incorporate *The Essentials of Baccalaureate Education for Professional Nursing Practice* (AACN, 2008).
 - Master's program curricula incorporate professional standards and guidelines as appropriate.
 - a. All master's degree programs incorporate *The Essentials of Master's Education in Nursing* (AACN, 2011) and additional relevant professional standards and guidelines as identified by the program.
 - b. All master's degree programs that prepare nurse practitioners incorporate *Criteria for Evaluation of Nurse Practitioner Programs* (NTF, 2012).
 - Graduate-entry program curricula incorporate *The Essentials of Baccalaureate Education for Professional Nursing Practice* (AACN, 2008) and appropriate graduate program standards and guidelines.
 - DNP program curricula incorporate professional standards and guidelines as appropriate.
 - a. All DNP programs incorporate *The Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice* (AACN, 2006) and additional relevant professional standards and guidelines if identified by the program.
 - b. All DNP programs that prepare nurse practitioners incorporate *Criteria for Evaluation of Nurse Practitioner Programs* (NTF, 2012).
 - Post-graduate APRN certificate programs that prepare nurse practitioners incorporate *Criteria for Evaluation of Nurse Practitioner Programs* (NTF, 2012).

Elaboration: Each degree/certificate program incorporates professional nursing standards and guidelines relevant to that program, area, role, population focus, or specialty. The program clearly demonstrates where and how content, knowledge, and skills required by identified sets of standards are incorporated into the curriculum.

APRN education programs (degree and certificate) (i.e., Clinical Nurse Specialist, Nurse Anesthesia, Nurse Midwife, and Nurse Practitioner) incorporate separate comprehensive graduate level courses to address the APRN core, defined as follows:

- *Advanced physiology/pathophysiology, including general principles that apply across the lifespan;*
- *Advanced health assessment, which includes assessment of all human systems, advanced assessment techniques, concepts and approaches; and*
- *Advanced pharmacology, which includes pharmacodynamics, pharmacokinetics, and pharmacotherapeutics of all broad categories of agents.*

Additional APRN core content specific to the role and population is integrated throughout the other role and population-focused didactic and clinical courses.

Separate courses in advanced physiology/pathophysiology, advanced health assessment, and advanced pharmacology are not required for students enrolled in post-master's DNP programs

who hold current national certification as advanced practice nurses, unless the program has deemed this necessary.

Master's programs that have a direct care focus but are not APRN education programs (e.g., nursing education and Clinical Nurse Leader), incorporate graduate level content addressing the APRN core. They are not required to offer this content as three separate courses.

Program Response:

The Master's programs curricula are largely congruent with *The Essentials of Master's Education in Nursing* (AACN, 2011) and the FNP concentration meets the National Task Force (NTF) criteria (NTF, 2012). A crosswalk mapping of content comparing course objectives (SLO's) with the Essentials of Master's Education (2011) was conducted in 2014, with the help of a consultant, for both the Nursing Administration and the Nursing Education concentrations. Several gaps in alignment with the updated Essentials were identified. These include a need to enhance content on informatics, inter-professional teams, and lack of content detailed in the SLO on genetics/genomics and global perspectives on health. The crosswalk table is available in the Appendices (Appendix 3.4). The crosswalk findings were presented to the faculty and the new Dean for their review in summer 2014. The faculty and Dean plan to revise the Master's curriculum for all tracks to improve alignment with the Master's Essentials in the fall of 2014. **(Standard III, Folder 2 in the Resource Room).**

All FNP courses were reviewed by concentration faculty in 2013 and were revised as needed to be consistent with the updated Master's Essentials and the latest version of the NTF criteria. The NONPF Competencies (2012) provide guidance for the development and revision of course content, clinical practice experiences, and student evaluation. FNP course syllabi and guidelines for evaluation of student clinical performance reflect the NONPF core competencies. A crosswalk table in (Appendix 3.5) depicts how the FNP courses match the AACN Master's Essentials (2011) and the NONPF criteria. These tables demonstrate where and how content, knowledge, and skills are integrated into the FNP curriculum. **(Standard III, Folder 2 in the Resource Room).**

As part of the Self-Study process, the CON used the Criteria for Evaluation of Nurse Practitioner programs (Nursing the Future, NTF, 2012) to assess the FNP concentration. The FNP curricula contains separate, advanced, graduate-level courses in health and physical assessment, advanced pathophysiology, and advanced pharmacology. As the FNP prepared graduate cares for patients of all ages, these courses present content across the lifespan.

III-C. The curriculum is logically structured to achieve expected student outcomes.

- Baccalaureate curricula build upon a foundation of the arts, sciences, and humanities.
- Master's curricula build on a foundation comparable to baccalaureate level nursing knowledge.
- DNP curricula build on a baccalaureate and/or master's foundation, depending on the level of entry of the student.
- Post-graduate APRN certificate programs build on graduate level nursing competencies and knowledge base.

Elaboration: Baccalaureate program faculty and students articulate how knowledge from courses in the arts, sciences, and humanities is incorporated into nursing practice. Post-baccalaureate entry programs in nursing incorporate the generalist knowledge common to baccalaureate nursing education as delineated in The Essentials of Baccalaureate Education for Professional Nursing Practice (AACN, 2008) as well as advanced course work.

Graduate curricula are clearly based on a foundation comparable to a baccalaureate degree in nursing. Graduate programs delineate how students who do not have a baccalaureate degree in nursing acquire the knowledge and competencies comparable to baccalaureate education in nursing as a foundation for advanced nursing education. Accelerated programs that move students from basic nursing preparation (e.g., associate degree or diploma education) to a graduate degree demonstrate how these students acquire baccalaureate level knowledge and competencies delineated in The Essentials of Baccalaureate Education for Professional Nursing Practice (AACN, 2008), even if they do not award a baccalaureate degree in nursing in addition to the graduate degree.

DNP programs, whether post-baccalaureate or post-master's, demonstrate how students acquire doctoral-level competencies delineated in The Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice (AACN, 2006). The program provides a rationale for the sequence of the curriculum for each program.

Program Response:

The Master's curricula for all three programs are logically structured to achieve expected student outcomes for the concentration. The Nursing Administration and Nursing Education curricula contain core courses that build on outcomes attained by graduates of any BSN program. All students in the Nursing Administration and Nursing Education programs take a core set of courses. These include MSN 500 Advanced Nursing Theories, MSN 502 Leadership and Organizational Behavior, MSN 504 Nursing Research, MSN 506 Quality Measures, Safety, and Effectiveness in Healthcare, MSN 508 Diversity and Social Issues in Healthcare, MSN 510 Legal and Ethical Issues in Healthcare Management, and MSN 599 Integrative Project. These courses link directly to content specified in the AACN essentials of Master's Education in Nursing (2011). Both the Nursing Administration and the Nursing Education concentrations contain their own specialty content and each of these courses build on content contained in the common core. Nursing Administration students must complete an advanced specialty course in nursing research (MSN 505) that builds on content and skills obtained in the core nursing research course (MSN 504). Nursing Education students must complete a course on evaluating student educational outcomes that also builds on content learned in core nursing research course. In conducting the Self-Study, we found that neither the Nursing Administration nor the Nursing Education curricula contained practica. Discussions about how to incorporate practical experience without increasing credit hours are on-going. The Syllabus for MSN 599, which is a core course for both the Nursing Administration and Nursing Education programs reflects, an emphasis on only Nursing Administration. Content will either need to be broadened to be a Capstone course for either track or a new Master's Capstone will need to be developed that fits all three tracks. Discussions about how best to proceed are underway. **(See Standard III, Folder 3 in Resource Room).**

Students in the FNP concentration have their own core courses, not shared with the Nursing Administration or Education students. The core FNP courses build on knowledge and skills obtained in BSN program and include: Nursing Theory, Evidenced-based practice, Health Systems, Policy and Informatics, and Health Promotion (See Standard III-A-3 in appendices). These courses provide the foundation for the direct core, which consists of Advanced Pathophysiology, Advanced Physical Assessment, and Advanced Pharmacology. These courses provide the scientific background and advanced clinical knowledge and skills required for clinical practice. Students then proceed to take courses in the functional core, which builds on previous course work and focuses on diagnosis and management of acute and chronic illnesses and attainment of clinical practice skills. The program of study culminates with a clinical residency (FNP 578) and an evidence-based family health project (FNP 588). Both of these courses are designed to facilitate synthesis and mastery of course work.

III-D. Teaching-learning practices and environments support the achievement of expected student outcomes.

Elaboration: Teaching-learning practices and environments (classroom, clinical, laboratory, simulation, distance education) support achievement of expected individual student outcomes identified in course, unit, and/or level objectives.

Program Response:

In the three Master's concentrations, a variety of effective-teaching learning strategies and supportive environments provide students with opportunities to demonstrate behaviors in accordance with course SLO and program outcomes. The Nursing Administration and Nursing Education concentrations are delivered online. The FNP concentration has been primarily on-ground but began transitioning to online for didactic courses in fall, 2013. All FNP core didactic courses are now delivered online, while the management and clinical courses are all on-ground. The University has been using the Next Generation Learning Management (NGL) system, which is a homegrown system. This system provides a learning management and content management system. In 2013, USU began transitioning to the Pearson Open-Class learning management system. This system is scheduled to be operative as of September 2, 2014 and NGL will be completely phased out. This Pearson system is more robust and will include better student engagement attributes such as more intuitive interface, integrated audio/visual and collaboration tools. The Open Class system also includes grading rubrics, and grade book and more than 680,000 free resources from the Pearson system. Support for students and faculty is available through USU's information technology department. The USU resources that support online education were described in Standard II-B.

Online course content in all concentrations is presented in a variety of formats including: simple word documents, streaming videos, web sites, and threaded discussions. In those courses still offered in an on-ground format (the FNP clinical courses) lecture, discussion, group work, and videos are used to facilitate learning. Clinical practica courses allow students to focus on the applying knowledge learned in the classroom to the clinical setting. For the FNP student, clinical settings provide a variety of experiences and take into account the entire lifespan.

There is a laboratory component to some of the FNP courses. This experience, supervised by FNP faculty, facilitates students' acquisition of basic psychomotor skills before the student attempts these skills in the clinical setting. Skills practiced in the laboratory setting include conducting a health history and physical exam with gynecological exam or male genitourinary exam, and problem focused exams such as an ear exam. Specific scenarios have been developed by lead faculty to assist students in mastering skills, team work, communication, and specific course objectives. Students present cases to the class on a weekly basis.

III-E. The curriculum includes planned clinical practice experiences that:

- enable students to integrate new knowledge and demonstrate attainment of program outcomes; and
- are evaluated by faculty.

Elaboration: To prepare students for a practice profession, each track in each degree program and post-graduate APRN certificate program affords students the opportunity to develop professional competencies in practice settings aligned to the educational preparation. Clinical practice experiences are provided for students in all programs, including those with distance education offerings. Clinical practice experiences involve activities that are designed to ensure students are competent to enter nursing practice at the level indicated by the degree/certificate program. The design, implementation, and evaluation of clinical practice experiences are aligned to student and program outcomes.

Program Response:

The CON provides FNP students with planned and supervised clinical practice learning experiences that provide students with opportunities to integrate new knowledge and demonstrate achievement of program outcomes. Through laboratory and clinical practica, students hone their clinical skills, integrate new knowledge, and develop their role as an advanced practice nurse. Clinical practice sites are varied but are primary care focused, as is consistent with the role and population focus of the FNP. Students may have clinical placements in internal medicine, pediatrics, women's health, or family practice sites. Students receive both the depth and breadth of clinical experience that is necessary to achieve FNP program outcomes.

The California Board of Nursing (BRN) has required that all laboratory hours be separately identified from clinical practice hours within each syllabus. All FNP students complete 768 clinical hours. This includes 87 clinical laboratory hours and 681 direct clinical practice hours conducted in a variety of clinical settings. These direct clinical experiences more than meet the 500 direct patient care clinical hour minimum required by the NTF (Criterion III-E).

III-F. The curriculum and teaching-learning practices consider the needs and expectations of the identified community of interest.

Elaboration: The curriculum and teaching-learning practices (e.g., use of distance technology, didactic activities, and simulation) are appropriate to the student population (e.g., adult learners, second language students, students in a post-graduate APRN certificate program) and consider the needs of the program-identified community of interest.

Program Response:

The curriculum and teaching-learning practices of the MSN programs consider the needs and expectations of the CON's identified community of interest, which include students, faculty members, alumni, employers, nurses, the Board of Trustees, and members of the professional community.

Students: are requested to complete course evaluations for each didactic course every term. Students also complete clinical site evaluations, instructor evaluations and clinical preceptor evaluations for every course. Data from these evaluations are used to improve the learning experiences of students in didactic and clinical courses. Students may also use faculty and advisors for identification of issues and to provide feedback on their educational experience.

Faculty members: in addition to being members of the community of interest, are also decision-makers and implementers of changes in the curriculum. Faculty members use their skills and expertise to continually assess that teaching/learning strategies and practices are suitable for the student population and that these practices build on prior knowledge and learning. For example, when MSN courses were transitioned from an on-ground to an online format, faculty consulted with the information technology department and with each other to ascertain best practices.

Alumni: Graduates of the USU FNP program have made requests to faculty, the Deans of the CON, and the provost that they cannot pursue national accreditation as an FNP until the USU FNP program is accredited by NLN-AC or CCNE. Although, NPs do not need national certification to work in California, it is required in most other states. In order to accommodate this request from students, USU has requested an on-site evaluation form CCNE. The new Dean is currently surveying all alumni.

Employers-Nurses: Dr. McLeod has already initiated a student satisfaction survey for Master's program graduates. In addition, the Dean will be assembling an Advisory Board to guide her in meeting needs in the community of interest.

Board of Trustees and Members of Professional Community:

The CON receives input from its Board of Trustees and from professional community groups on local, state, and national levels. The Board of Trustees oversees the University. In response to the revision of AACN's Essentials of Master's Education, Dean McCloud has discussed with the Board of Trustees the curricular changes that must be made to the Master's curriculum in order to better align with the updated essentials.

III-G. Individual student performance is evaluated by the faculty and reflects achievement of expected student outcomes. Evaluation policies and procedures for individual student performance are defined and consistently applied.

Elaboration: Evaluation of student performance is consistent with expected student outcomes. Grading criteria are clearly defined for each course, communicated to students, and applied

consistently. Processes exist by which the evaluation of individual student performance is communicated to students. In instances where preceptors facilitate students' clinical learning experiences, faculty may seek input from preceptors regarding student performance, but ultimately faculty are responsible for evaluation of individual student outcomes. The requirement for evaluation of student clinical performance by qualified faculty applies to all students in all programs. Faculty evaluation of student clinical performance may be accomplished through a variety of mechanisms.

Program Response:

Evaluation of student performance is consistent with expected student outcomes. These outcomes include maintaining satisfactory performance and progression toward completion of the Master's degree. Regardless of the Master's program, these outcomes also include meeting all criteria for admission, continuation, graduation and completing all Master's program requirements. Criteria for evaluation of student performance are published and found in each course syllabi and in the USU course catalog. University policies are linked in each online course.

Grading criteria are linked in each online course under course policies and each syllabus contains the course grading scale. Grading polices are also included in the University Catalog [University Catalog | United States University](#). Course syllabi contain detailed grading information as it applies to each individual course and include specific Student Learning Outcomes. Syllabi for core Master's courses are available on-site in the Resource Room (Standard III, Folder 3 in Resource Room). Faculty in each course using a variety of methods evaluates students. These may include quizzes, essays, threaded discussions, skill demonstrations, group work, projects, logs of activity, and term papers. In the FNP Physical Assessment course (FNP 553), students must also submit SOAP notes and complete a health history and physical exam.

For clinical courses in the FNP program, clinical evaluation is completed through the preceptor. CON faculty through the use of site visits validates these preceptor evaluations. All students are assigned a preceptor and are supervised by a CON faculty member. Student Learning Outcomes for each course, drive the selection of a preceptor and clinical site. FNP students also log their clinical encounters into Project Nurse Clinical-log system, which tracks clinical experiences, as well as the number of clinical hours completed. See Appendix 3.6.

III-H. Curriculum and teaching-learning practices are evaluated at regularly scheduled intervals to foster ongoing improvement.

Elaboration: Faculty use data from faculty and student evaluation of teaching-learning practices to inform decisions that facilitate the achievement of student outcomes. Such evaluation activities may be formal or informal, formative or summative. Curriculum is regularly evaluated by faculty and other communities of interest as appropriate. Data from the evaluation of curriculum and teaching-learning practices are used to foster program improvement.

Program Response:

Curriculum and teaching-learning strategies are regularly evaluated by students and faculty. Students evaluate their courses every term. Faculty are provided with results of

these evaluations and use the feedback to make changes in the course. Informal feedback from students is also welcome and comes directly to faculty or administrators through meetings with students or email or telephone calls.

As a result of the Self-Study process, the CON has recognized a need to more proactively seek student feedback. This could be accomplished through town-hall meetings with the Dean or through student feedback on CON committees. Actively seeking and utilizing student feedback for improving student educational experiences will be thoroughly addressed in fall, 2014.

Summary of strengths, challenges, and action plans

Strengths of Standard III

1. The curriculum of the Master's in Nursing Administration, Master's in Nursing Education and Master's in FNP are clearly defined, with clear statements about Student Learning Outcomes; congruence with USU and CON mission; and evidence of professional standards. The curriculum is logically structured within a supportive environment.
2. Curricula and teaching/learning strategies are designed to reflect professional nursing standards and foster achievement of expected student outcomes.

Areas for Continuous Improvement

1. The three Master's programs need to be reconfigured into a single program with three tracks. The Program Learning Outcomes were revised to reflect outcomes for a single program that is congruent with the program's mission and goals at the faculty meeting in July 2014.
2. Alignment of Student Learning Outcomes for each course with CCNE Master's Essentials must be improved. Specifically, content on informatics in healthcare, inter-professional teams, and patient-centered care need to be enhanced in the nursing administration and education concentrations. Genetics and genomics content needs to be enhanced in all three concentrations.
3. There are no practica in Nursing Administration or Education courses. In order to meet AACN Essentials of Master's Education, planned clinical experiences must be incorporated into these two tracks.
4. Syllabus for MSN 599, which is a core course for both the Nursing administration and Nursing Education programs reflects, an emphasis on only Nursing Administration. Content will either need to be broadened to be a Capstone course for either track or a new Master's Capstone will need to be developed that fits all three tracks.
5. Once all appropriate courses have switched to an online delivery mode and the Pearson LMS has been completely instituted, best practices for online education must receive greater attention and faculty support including instructional design support must be enhanced.
6. Greater attention needs to be paid to formative and summative evaluations of all three tracks and improvements made as indicated. Evaluation of curriculum and teaching-learning practices must be more robust and systematic to foster ongoing improvement.
7. The Community of Interest must be more actively involved and the CON must be proactive in seeking this involvement.

Action Plan for Standard III

1. Continue with reconfiguration of Master's program into one program with three distinct tracks. Actively engage all faculty in these discussions to broaden support and enhance creative thinking.
2. Continue curriculum revisions with a goal of more closely aligning all courses with the AACN Essentials of Master's Education.
3. Include clinical practica for Nursing Administration and Nursing Education tracks in revised curriculum. Consideration must be given as to how to accomplish this without increasing credit hours and, therefore, cost to students.
4. Consider revising MSN 599, the Capstone course to include all three tracks.
5. Continue to improve online teaching/learning experience by instituting best practices such as Quality Matters Criteria and to explore obtain services of an instructional designer to assist faculty in developing or revising online courses.
6. Continue to collect and analyze formative and summative data for quality improvement and implement a systematic and robust program evaluation.
7. Continue to work with faculty consultants to develop, implement, and evaluate activities to engage the COI. These might include regular meetings with the Dean and students and surveys of employers and alumni.

Standard IV

Program Effectiveness: Assessment and Achievement of Program Outcomes

The program is effective in fulfilling its mission and goals as evidenced by achieving expected program outcomes. Program outcomes include student outcomes, faculty outcomes, and other outcomes identified by the program. Data on program effectiveness are used to foster ongoing program improvement.

IV-A. A systematic process is used to determine program effectiveness.

Elaboration: The program uses a systematic process to obtain relevant data to determine program effectiveness. The process:

- *is written, ongoing, and exists to determine achievement of program outcomes;*
- *is comprehensive (i.e., includes completion, licensure, certification, and employment rates, as required by the U.S. Department of Education; and other program outcomes);*
- *identifies which quantitative and/or qualitative data are collected to assess achievement of the program outcomes;*
- *includes timelines for collection, review of expected and actual outcomes, and analysis; and*
- *is periodically reviewed and revised as appropriate.*

Program Response:

The USU systematic process for collecting data to determine the CON's MSN programs effectiveness is being fully implemented in the fall, 2014. The initiation of the Strategic Plan and the Program Review and Learning Outcome Assessment Manual form the basis for the systematic evaluation process. Partial initiation of the Strategic Plan has begun and implementation will continue through 2015. Data about the progress of the Strategic Plan can be reviewed in Standard I Appendices. These documents also provide the background for the evaluation plan and process for all colleges of USU.

According to the Strategic Plan a timeline has been established for all colleges to comprehensively participate in this process. The manual establishes the process and the areas of Strategic Direction provide a timeline of specific events and major areas to be assessed. All programs were to review their Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and revise the curriculum maps by June of 2014. (See Appendix 4.1) This is intended to be a responsibility of each college administrator and faculty with direction, support, and assistance from USU administration. The first and second milestones in the Strategic Directions were met by the CON. The next step, step 4, on Academic Quality in this process was to have the program reviews of the CON completed by June 2014. When Dr. McLeod assumed the leadership of the CON it was her desire to move the comprehensive program reviews to the 2014 -2015 academic year. The new Dean and all faculty will assume the responsibility for developing a systematic program evaluation plan for the CON. They will use the process outlined in the program evaluation manual as a guide. The data and areas of compliance and deficits resulting from this Self-Study for CCNE accreditation will assist the Dean and faculty to set priorities and pursue a systematic program evaluation plan. The plan will include assessing program outcomes, data on completion rates, licensure, certification, and employments rates as required by the U.S. Department of Education. The existing time line established by USU addresses the frequency for review and revision.

Previously, the colleges carried out their own plans for evaluation under the direction of the Deans. Nursing, however, has maintained evaluation processes in course, faculty, teaching, and clinical evaluation through the years. Samples of course and teacher evaluations can be found in Appendix 4.2. The historical binders of Faculty Minutes address the work of the faculty and changes that were made. However, linking the data of the evaluation to the results of a change in curricula or teaching methods or policy is not present. Documentation of competence of the graduate students enrolled in the FNP program, course and teacher evaluations, as well as preceptor and faculty evaluations of the clinical experiences are available for review on-site in binders of paper and pencil documents. A portion of these evaluations have been translated to digital copies and are available in (Appendix 4.3) Just recently, the CON has moved to electronic data gathering for the clinical recordings of the FNP students. Project Nurse is part of this data gathering mechanism that has been adopted for ongoing recording of individual student clinical experiences and reflective learning. The competence of the FNP students was demanded by faculty, as well as the regulations of the BRN and, therefore these data were closely monitored and recorded. Materials validating these evaluation processes can be found on site in binders.

IV-B. Program completion rates demonstrate program effectiveness.

Elaboration: The program demonstrates achievement of required program outcomes regarding completion. For each degree program (baccalaureate, master's, and DNP) and post-graduate APRN certificate program:

- *The completion rate for each of the three most recent calendar years is provided.*
- *The program specifies the entry point and defines the time period to completion.*
- *The program describes the formula it uses to calculate the completion rate.*
- *The completion rate for the most recent calendar year is 70% or higher. However, if the completion rate for the most recent calendar year is less than 70%, (1) the completion rate is 70% or higher when the annual completion rates for the three most recent calendar years are averaged or (2) the completion rate is 70% or higher when excluding students who have identified factors such as family obligations, relocation, financial barriers, and decisions to change major or to transfer to another institution of higher education.*

A program with a completion rate less than 70% for the most recent calendar year provides a written explanation/analysis with documentation for the variance.

This key element is not applicable to a new degree or certificate program that does not yet have individuals who have completed the program.

Program Response:

Students in all three Master's tracks enter as post-baccalaureate students. Students can enroll several times during the year, spring, summer, and fall. FNP, Administration and Education full-time curriculum grids show time period to completion if full-time students stay on track. On-time completion rate is defined by USU as 150% of "normal" time to completion, which varies by program. For the FNP program, "normal" time is defined as 24 months, while the MSN Administration and MSN Education programs, normal time is 16 months.

The FNP program was approved by WASC in 2009 and received approval from the California BRN in 2010. The first 14 students were admitted in spring of 2010. Another 14 students were admitted in summer of 2010 and six were admitted in fall of 2010. Nearly 65% of these students completed the program within the benchmarked time of 36 months.

In 2011, no students were admitted in the spring term, four students were admitted in the summer, and six were admitted in the fall. Two students admitted in the summer term have completed the program and two withdrew. Of the six students admitted in the fall term, three have completed, one has withdrawn, and one had a change in plan of study. Another student has matriculated into the program and is on track to complete within the 36 month completion benchmark.

For calendar year 2012, six students were admitted in the spring term. No students were admitted in the summer term and eight were admitted in the fall. All six of the students admitted in spring 2012 have since completed the program and graduated. Of the eight students admitted in the fall of 2012, two have withdrawn and one has had a change in plan of study. The remaining five students are still within the benchmarked time of 36 months to completion and are likely to complete during that time periods.

Table IV-B-1 FNP Program Graduation Rates

Year admitted	Number of students enrolled	Number of students completed \leq 36 months, N (%)	Number of students who completed > 36 months, N (%)	Number of students still in program, N (%)	Students lost to attrition, N (%)
2010	34	22 (64.7%)	1 (2.9%)	0	11 (32.4%)
2011	10	5 (50%)	-	1 (10%)	4 (40%)
2012	14	6 (43%)	0	5 (35.7%)	3 (21.4%)

The Nursing Administration program first admitted students in spring of 2012. The benchmark for completion for MSN Administration students is 24 months. Six students were admitted in spring 2012. Of these, five have completed the program and one withdrew. In fall 2013, 11 students were admitted. Three of these students have withdrawn and the remaining eight students are on track to complete within the benchmarked time of 24 months

As of July 2014, five students have graduated and one withdrew from the program. Eleven students were admitted from spring 2013 through fall 2013 (AY 2012-2013). Three students have withdrawn and no student has yet completed the program.

Table IV-B-2 Administration Graduation Rates

Year admitted	Number of students enrolled	Number of students completed ≤ 24 months, N (%)	Number of students who completed > 24 months, N (%)	Number of students still in program, N (%)	Students lost to attrition, N (%)
2011	0	0	0	0	0
2012	6	5 (83.3%)	0	0	1 (16.7%)
2013	11	0	NA	8 (72.7%)	3 (27.3)

The Nursing Education program first admitted students in summer of 2011. The benchmark for completion for Nursing Education students is 24 months. One student was admitted in summer of 2011 and subsequently withdrew. Three students were admitted in fall 2011 and all three have completed the program within the benchmarked time period. In spring of 2012, one student was admitted, four were admitted in the summer term, and two were admitted in the fall term. Six of these students have completed the program. In 2013, two students were admitted in the spring term, one in the summer term, and five in the fall term. All of these students are still enrolled in the program.

Table IV-B-3: Nursing Education Graduation Rates

Year admitted	Number of students enrolled	Number of students completed ≤ 24 months, N (%)	Number of students who completed > 24 months, N (%)	Number of students still in program, N (%)	Students lost to attrition, N (%)
2011	4	3 (75%)	NA	0	1 (25%)
2012	7	6 (85.7%)	NA	1 (14.3%)	0
2013	8	NA	NA	8	0

IV-C. Licensure and certification pass rates demonstrate program effectiveness.

Elaboration: The pre-licensure program demonstrates achievement of required program outcomes regarding licensure.

- *The NCLEX-RN[®] pass rate for each campus/site and track is provided for each of the three most recent calendar years.*
- *The NCLEX-RN[®] pass rate for each campus/site and track is 80% or higher for first-time takers for the most recent calendar year. However, if the NCLEX-RN[®] pass rate for any campus/site and track is less than 80% for first-time takers for the most recent calendar year, (1) the pass rate for that campus/site or track is 80% or higher for all takers (first-time and repeat) for the most recent calendar year, (2) the pass rate for that campus/site or track is 80% or higher for first-time takers when the annual pass rates for the three most recent calendar years are averaged, or (3) the pass rate for that campus/site or track is 80% or higher for all takers (first-time and repeat) when the annual pass rates for the three most recent calendar years are averaged.*

A campus/site or track with an NCLEX-RN® pass rate of less than 80% for first-time takers for the most recent calendar year provides a written explanation/analysis with documentation for the variance and a plan to meet the 80% NCLEX-RN® pass rate for first-time takers. The explanation may include trend data, information about numbers of test takers, data relative to specific campuses/sites or tracks, and data on repeat takers.

The graduate program demonstrates achievement of required program outcomes regarding certification. Certification results are obtained and reported in the aggregate for those graduates taking each examination, even when national certification is not required to practice in a particular state.

- *Data are provided regarding the number of graduates and the number of graduates taking each certification examination.*
- *The certification pass rate for each examination for which the program prepares graduates is provided for each of the three most recent calendar years.*
- *The certification pass rate for each examination is 80% or higher for first-time takers for the most recent calendar year. However, if the pass rate for any certification examination is less than 80% for first-time takers for the most recent calendar year, (1) the pass rate for that certification examination is 80% or higher for all takers (first-time and repeat) for the most recent calendar year, (2) the pass rate for that certification examination is 80% or higher for first-time takers when the annual pass rates for the three most recent calendar years are averaged, or (3) the pass rate for that certification examination is 80% or higher for all takers (first-time and repeat) when the annual pass rates for the three most recent calendar years are averaged.*

A program with a pass rate of less than 80% for any certification examination for the most recent calendar year provides a written explanation/analysis for the variance and a plan to meet the 80% certification pass rate for first-time takers. The explanation may include trend data, information about numbers of test takers, and data on repeat takers.

This key element is not applicable to a new degree or certificate program that does not yet have individuals who have taken licensure or certification examinations.

Program Response:

The MSN programs have not had any graduates eligible to sit for National Advanced Practice Nurse Certification since the inception of the programs in 2010 and 2011. USU is not nationally accredited by a nursing accreditor/approver. The inability of graduates to pursue national certification is one of the reasons that USU and the CON have undertaken the Self-Study. Once accredited the data of graduates taking these examinations will be retained and monitored for pass rates.

IV-D. Employment rates demonstrate program effectiveness.

Elaboration: The program demonstrates achievement of required outcomes regarding employment rates.

- *The employment rate is collected separately for each degree program (baccalaureate, master's, and DNP) and post-graduate APRN certificate program.*
- *Data are collected within 12 months of program completion. For example, employment data may be collected at the time of program completion or at any time within 12 months of program completion.*

- *The employment rate is 70% or higher. However, if the employment rate is less than 70%, the employment rate is 70% or higher when excluding graduates who have elected not to be employed.*

Any program with an employment rate less than 70% provides a written explanation/analysis with documentation for the variance.

This key element is not applicable to a new degree or certificate program that does not yet have individuals who have completed the program.

Program Response:

The employment rate of the MSN-FNP program demonstrates program effectiveness. It should be noted that the State of California does not require national certification to work as a NP in this state. There are several ways to demonstrate to the BRN that the graduate of an approved program is a competent provider and be granted approval as a NP and access to a license for furnishing drugs and devices to the patients/clients in your care.

Anecdotal data is available for pre-2013 graduates. In 2013 a total of 13 graduates completed the MSN FNP program. The Director of the FNP program has provided a listing of the positions held by the graduates of the program. Nine of the graduates are in direct patient care in clinical settings, two are teaching, and one is in the role of a Director of Nursing in a Correctional Facility. This listing can be found in Appendix 4.4. The inclusion of regularly scheduled assessment on employment and employer satisfaction with the MSN graduate's knowledge and competence will be identified as a necessary item for ongoing assessment for the CON in the program evaluation plan.

IV-E. Program outcomes demonstrate program effectiveness.

Elaboration: The program demonstrates achievement of outcomes other than those related to completion rates (Key Element IV-B), licensure and certification pass rates (Key Element IV-C), and employment rates (Key Element IV-D); and those related to faculty (Key Element IV-F).

Program outcomes are defined by the program and incorporate expected levels of achievement. Program outcomes are appropriate and relevant to the degree and certificate programs offered and may include (but are not limited to) student learning outcomes; student and alumni achievement; and student, alumni, and employer satisfaction data.

Analysis of the data demonstrates that, in the aggregate, the program is achieving its outcomes. Any program with outcomes lower than expected provides a written explanation/analysis for the variance.

Program Response:

Although MSN outcome data collection is in a formative phase, student files demonstrate positive outcomes and effectiveness of the MSN programs. Students Learning Outcomes are found in every course syllabi, are met as determined by the course evaluation criteria, and the student's progression through the program of enrollment. Student records are hard copy and on file for all graduates of all MSN programs and can be reviewed on site. This is a demonstration of continuous monitoring program effectiveness and outcomes and will be a part of the plan for demonstrating effective outcomes of the MSN programs as a systematic evaluation plan

is developed in the CON. Project Concern/Project Nurse is a computer based system that will assist the CON in gathering the data to assess the effectiveness of the MSN programs. (See Appendix 4.5) This system is currently being used to assist the FNP students to collect data from their clinical experiences. Multiple methods of data management and retrieval will be available for reporting program outcomes with the use of this computer program and it is planned to be part of the upcoming evaluation plan.

Student enrollment, a form of assessing program effectiveness, continues to grow in the MSN programs with the MSN FNP program attracting a large portion of the students. A recent report on summer 2014 shows total enrollment in the CON was 140 students which is 33% of the total program enrollment of 423 at USU. Of the CON enrollment, 56% (23 new enrollments plus the 55 continuing student's equals 78) are in the MSN programs.

Following BRN approval of the MSN FNP program 34 students enrolled in the program during 2010. The number of graduates in 2012 for the calendar year has been reported as 22 students. Student records are available for review on these graduates which document student competence and satisfactory progress through the program. Preliminary data on the employment status of these graduates is available; we are currently ascertaining further data of all graduates. A graduate survey of program satisfaction has recently been instituted.

In the calendar year of 2013, students completing the program were reported to be 12. Records documenting the student progression, evaluation, and competencies are on file for review. A graduate survey of student satisfaction of the FNP program can be found in Appendix 4.6. The rate of employment for these graduates is 100% and the list of the students and their employer can be found in the Appendix 4.4 as well. Since the admission dates into the program can occur at the beginning of every session, or 6 times a calendar year, the completion dates also vary. Therefore, the data was tabulated for a 12 month calendar year and not by semester or cohort.

The MSN Administration program has enrolled a total of 22 students beginning in fall 2011, 18 students still in progress and with five graduates in the online program. The MSN Education had enrolled 24 students since fall semester of 2011 with 17 students in progress and nine graduates reported in the program.

The enrollment, progress, graduation, and employment of the students from the CON MSN programs demonstrates effectiveness and outcomes, although the data is not in a continuous stream and integrated into a total evaluation plan of the program. Data on the factors influencing withdrawals has not been documented but will be a part of the evaluation plan to be generated in the fall of 2014 by the CON.

The graduates of the MSN programs have not been able to sit for national certification or enter another graduate program due to USU not being accredited by a national nurse accrediting body. Therefore, certification rates cannot be a measure of effectiveness of the program outcomes at this time.

As noted, there has been an absence of continuous data that assesses the outcomes and effectiveness of the MSN programs since the beginning in 2010. Evaluation of the academic quality of all colleges has begun to become a major process at USU and is demonstrated in the progress being made in the implementation of the Strategic Plan. This will also be a major focus in the coming year in the CON.

IV-F. Faculty outcomes, individually and in the aggregate, demonstrate program effectiveness.

Elaboration: The program demonstrates achievement of expected faculty outcomes. Expected faculty outcomes:

- are identified for the faculty as a group;
- incorporate expected levels of achievement;
- reflect expectations of faculty in their roles and evaluation of faculty performance;
- are consistent with and contribute to achievement of the program's mission and goals; and
- are congruent with institution and program expectations.

Actual faculty outcomes are presented in the aggregate for the faculty as a group, analyzed, and compared to expected outcomes.

Program Response:

Each faculty, whether core or adjunct, has recorded their professional development in their Curriculum Vitae which are on file on-site and open for review. It is the intent of USU to establish and maintain quality professional faculty in all colleges and at all levels. Individuals who hold expertise in specialized areas of their profession will be recruited to fill the ranks of core, as well as adjunct faculty positions. The CON has begun to identify and recruit nursing faculty who meet these criteria and will be present as faculty in the fall term of 2014. The added faculty in the CON will begin to form a cadre of professionals, ongoing and new, who will address the identified areas for development found through the internal investigation of performing a Self-Study and correct these to improve the quality of all programs. A total program evaluation plan is necessary for refining and advancing an already successful MSN program to bring it to another level of quality and achievement. The CON will begin this process in the fall semester of 2014.

IV-G. The program defines and reviews formal complaints according to established policies.

Elaboration: The program defines what constitutes a formal complaint and maintains a record of formal complaints received. The program's definition of formal complaints includes, at a minimum, student complaints. The program's definition of formal complaints and the procedures for filing a complaint are communicated to relevant constituencies.

Program Response:

The policy for submitting a formal complaint can be found in the catalog that is updated and published annually in print and online. Access to this document is open to the constituents of USU and the public. The USU policy for filing a complaint or grievance is modeled on common language used by like institutions. The process identified for filing a complaint related to course work should attempted to be resolved within the College

of enrollment. A series of steps are outlined in this process. If at all possible, the complaint/grievance should end at this point. If resolution does not occur at this point and all options are expended then the complaint/grievance must be brought to the Office of the Provost. A sample of the complaint filed by a student in the CON can be found in Appendix 4.7. If a complaint or grievance is related to an issue outside of the classroom, the Director of Administration will attend to the issue by discussion or in writing when the student submits the complaint/grievance in writing. The timeline for processing through decision-making is part of the instructions found in the catalog. The language is clear, concise, and understandable. The information is available and open to all constituents of USU.

IV-H. Data analysis is used to foster ongoing program improvement.

Elaboration: The program uses outcome data for improvement. Data regarding completion, licensure, certification, and employment rates; other program outcomes; and formal complaints are used as indicated to foster program improvement.

- *Data regarding actual outcomes are compared to expected outcomes.*
- *Discrepancies between actual and expected outcomes inform areas for improvement.*
- *Changes to the program to foster improvement and achievement of program outcomes are deliberate, ongoing, and analyzed for effectiveness.*
- *Faculty are engaged in the program improvement process.*

Program Response:

The purpose for assessment and analysis is for improvement of a program. USU's mission speaks to providing professional and personal educational opportunities in a variety of methods and program offerings. One way to assure meeting this goal is to attain and sustain quality educational programs and this cannot be accomplished without ongoing assessment for the purpose of continuous improvement. It is for this reason that USU is working with accrediting bodies such as WASC, CCNE, and BRN to meet the national, regional, and professional standards and build a measure of quality. The guidance and direction that accompanies the process of writing a Self-Study or Strategic Plans is vital for the success of that institution. Although the process of completing the task may be burdensome in some manner, the outcomes often reveal multiple strengths which can be building blocks for the future, as well as areas of needed improvement which when resolved can help to build a stronger program and institution.

The CON, as part of USU, holds the same value of providing quality programs for the enrolled students. Data of actual outcomes will be compared to the expected outcomes; the discrepancies will be assessed, changes to the program will be deliberate, ongoing and analyzed for effectiveness, and the faculty will be fully engaged in the program improvement process. Demonstrations of such activities have already taken place and been documented in faculty minutes, as well as found in this Self-Study. The CON has an immediate goal of bringing the MSN programs in-line with national standards and the operation of the College to a level that demonstrates effective outcomes as confirmed in quality graduates at all levels.

Standard IV Summary: Strengths, Challenges and Action Plans

Strengths

USU maintains affordable nursing education in a positive learning environment and continues to advance the institution with activities that reflect an ongoing concern for academic quality, fiscal soundness, and innovation. The CON, since its inception, has built MSN programs that reflected the community of interest's need for Advanced Practice Nurse Education.

Support systems have been improved, student services have been expanded, faculty expectations and potential promotion processes put in place, and program quality with a focus on systematic evaluation is being undertaken throughout all colleges. Through all this, the faculty did evaluate the students and record the results and maintained records which are available for review. Success in enrolling and graduating students in all programs has been maintained and is demonstrated through 100% employment rates in the MSN-FNP program.

Challenges

The establishment of a systematic plan for evaluation is essential and will be closely monitored. The accreditation of the MSN program at USU will assist the students to pursue national accreditation and further education in doctoral programs, as well as demonstrating a level of quality for the programs offered in the CON. The amount of work necessary for establishing the evaluation plan, and engaging in continuous improvement will demand the knowledge and leadership of the Dean and complete faculty engagement. USU has demonstrated the support of the CON and the need to increase the quality of the College through added faculty positions and support services. Continuation of self-assessment in the other programs operating in the CON will need to be addressed in the near future to carry on the quest for quality of all program offerings. Once clarification of a common core curriculum for the MSN programs is established and approved, the recruitment for added students can begin. Affordable programs for advanced practice nursing are still a demand of the community of interest in this area of the nation. Reaching out to the underserved groups of students in these communities will be necessary to meet the mission and goals and sustain fiscal soundness of USU.

Action Plans

An ongoing systematic plan of evaluation will be foremost on the agenda of change in the CON. maintaining mechanisms to collect appropriate data to monitor the program's effectiveness and outcomes will be an ongoing focus. The identification and recruitment of faculty for the open positions has . These are actions that will be included as part of the evaluation plan which can be demonstrated on a diagram that addresses a timeline, an identified concern, resolution methodology, implementation, and parties responsible and accountable for carrying out the process. With the identified actions a focus for immediate attention by the CON, USU will be able to demonstrate progress in the advancement of the Strategic Plan, as well as undeniably meeting the stated mission and goals of the institution.

